



United Nations Environment Programme



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Meeting of Government-Nominated Experts
to Review the Draft Action Plan for the
Wider Caribbean Region

Caracas, Venezuela, 28 January-1 February 1980

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA

In accordance with resolution 2997 (XXVII) of the General Assembly, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was established "as a focal point for environmental action and co-ordination within the United Nations system". The Governing Council of UNEP defined this environmental action as encompassing a comprehensive, transectoral approach to environmental problems which should deal not only with the consequences but also with the causes of environmental degradation.

Although environmental problems are global in scope, a regional approach to solving them seemed more realistic. By adopting a regional approach, UNEP felt it could focus on specific problems of high priority to the States of a given region thereby more readily responding to the needs of the Governments and helping to mobilize more fully their own national resources. It was thought that undertaking activities of common interest to coastal States on a regional basis should, in due time, provide the basis for dealing effectively with broader environmental problems.

UNEP's regional approach is at present being applied to eight regional seas where action plans are operative or are being developed: the Mediterranean (adopted in 1975), the Red Sea (adopted in 1976), the Kuwait Action Plan Region (adopted in 1978), the West African Region (adoption expected in 1980), the East Asian Seas (adoption expected in 1980) the South-East Pacific (adoption expected in 1980),

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the South-West Pacific (adoption expected in 1981) and the Wider Caribbean. Unless stated otherwise, the Wider Caribbean Region is defined as comprising the States and Territories of the insular Caribbean including the Bahamas, the north-eastern parts of South America from Colombia to French Guiana, Panama, the States of Central America, Mexico, the Gulf States of the United States, as well as the coastal and open waters of the Caribbean Sea proper, the Gulf of Mexico, and the waters of the Atlantic Ocean adjacent to the States and Territories mentioned above.

Two elements are fundamental to UNEP's regional programme:

(a) Co-operation with the Governments of the regions. Since any specific regional programme is aimed at benefiting the States of that region, Governments are encouraged to participate from the very beginning in the formulation and acceptance of the programme. After acceptance, the implementation of the adopted programme is carried out by national institutions which have been nominated by their Governments.

(b) Co-ordination of the technical work through the United Nations system. Although the regional programmes are implemented predominantly by Government-nominated institutions, a large number of the United Nations specialized organizations are called upon to provide assistance to these national institutions. UNEP acts as an overall co-ordinator although in some cases this role is limited to the initial phase of the activities. Thus the support and experience of the whole United Nations system contributes to the programme.

The components of a regional programme are outlined in an "Action Plan" which is formally adopted by the Governments before the programme enters an operational phase.

Each action plan consists of three standard components as adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 5-18 June 1972) and endorsed by subsequent meetings of UNEP's Governing Council. They are:

/(i) Environmental

(i) Environment assessment. The assessment and evaluation of the magnitude and consequences of developmental actions on the environment are essential activities enabling the national policy-makers to manage their natural resources in an effective and sustainable manner and for providing a basis for assistance where necessary.

(ii) Environmental management. A wider range of activities requiring regional co-operation falls under this component: rational and sustainable exploitation of living resources, utilization of renewable sources of energy, management of freshwater resources, disaster preparedness and co-operation in cases of emergency, etc. Regional conventions, elaborated by specific technical protocols, usually provide the legal framework for the action plan and have in many regions proved to be an excellent tool in the hands of environmental managers.

(iii) Supporting measures. The national institutions are the institutional basis for the implementation of the action plan. Large-scale technical assistance and training are provided to them where necessary to allow their full participation in the programme. Existing global or regional co-ordinating mechanisms are used when appropriate. However, specific regional mechanisms may be created if Governments feel they are necessary. Public awareness of environmental problems is stimulated as an essential supporting measure for the action plan. Financial support is initially provided by UNEP and other international and regional organizations, but, as the programme develops, it is expected that the Governments of the Region assume increasing financial responsibility.

In accordance with the regional approach, an early association was sought by UNEP with the Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL) and a joint UNEP/CEPAL project team was established to co-ordinate, under the overall guidance of UNEP and CEPAL, the preparations for the development of an Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme.

The present meeting is the first in the Wider Caribbean Region at which all aspects of the proposed regional programme will be reviewed.

The following annotations to the provisional agenda are intended to facilitate the proceedings of the meeting.

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting will be preceded by a formal inaugural ceremony scheduled for the morning of 28 January, the details of which, including the opening address, will be announced in the corresponding order of the day.

2. Organization of the meeting

This agenda item will be divided into two sub-items, namely: rules of procedure and election of officers.

2.1 Rules of procedure. The Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic Commission for Latin America will govern the proceedings of the meeting.

2.2 Election of officers. The meeting should elect a chairman, 2 vice-chairmen and a rapporteur.

It is proposed that the work of the meeting be carried out in plenary and by such ad hoc working groups as may prove desirable.

3. Adoption of the agenda

The provisional agenda proposed by CEPAL and UNEP in document E/CEPAL/PROY.3/L.1, subject to the changes which may be introduced by delegates, is intended to focus the meeting's attention on the most important issues needing discussion and recommendations.

The final draft Caribbean Environment Action Plan will be prepared on the basis of the meeting's recommendations, and will be placed before the Intergovernmental Meeting in May 1980 where it is expected to be adopted.

4. Review of the Draft Action Plan for the Development and Protection of the Wider Caribbean Region

This agenda item is based on document E/CEPAL/PROY.3/L.3 and will be considered under four sub-items, namely: environmental assessment, environmental management, legal aspects and supporting measures. These four subjects form the major components of the draft Action Plan.

A number of information documents are also available to the meeting, providing background on or elaboration of the various components of the Action Plan. They have been prepared by UNEP, CEPAL and by selected

/specialized bodies

specialized bodies of the United Nations and other international, intergovernmental or national organizations. Those features of the information documents which have a direct relevance to the proposed Action Plan have been summarized in document E/CEPAL/PROY.3/L.INF.3.

No attempt has been made in document E/CEPAL/PROY.3/L.3 to indicate priorities or to recommend preferred options for action, and it is expected that the meeting will address itself to these issues.

4.1 Environmental assessment. Chapter II of document E/CEPAL/PROY.3/L.3 contains recommendations for co-operative activities related to the assessment of the environmental quality of the Region and of the factors influencing or influenced by the environmental quality.

4.2 Environmental management. The recommendations presented in chapter III of document E/CEPAL/PROY.3/L.3 have been formulated as a set of activities which may provide opportunities for regional or subregional co-operation in the field of environmental management. These recommendations are basically derived from the detailed sectoral overviews presented to the meeting as information documents.

4.3 Legal aspects. Chapter IV of document E/CEPAL/PROY.3/L.3 suggests some activities which might provide a legal framework for the Action Plan and which might also contribute to the strengthening or making of new environmental legislation on national, regional and international levels. Document E/CEPAL/PROY.3/L.5 contains suggestions for the principles and guidelines which may be used for a regional agreement.

4.4 Supporting measures. Chapter V of document E/CEPAL/PROY.3/L.3 summarizes the kind of supporting measures required for the harmonious development of the Action Plan. They include institutional and financial arrangements as well as measures related to the public awareness of environmental problems. In document E/CEPAL/PROY.3/L.4 some of the options for financial and institutional arrangements are elaborated in greater detail.

5. Other business

Delegates may suggest other items for consideration.

/6. Adoption

6. Adoption of the report

A final text of the report of the meeting should be approved before the end of the meeting.

7. Closure of the meeting